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## VI. Conclusion

In general, the materials presented in this document have shown that the Florida judicial branch strategic planning model provides tools for:

- ✓ aligning local Florida trial court strategic planning efforts with the general direction outlined in the *Long-Range Strategic Plan for the Florida Judicial Branch*;
- ✓ determining a court's purpose or mission in light of the mandates it must address and the expectations of its stakeholders;
- ✓ developing a composite vision of a desired trial court future;
- ✓ identifying the nature, magnitude, and sources of the demands likely to be placed on a court;
- ✓ assessing the potential implications of demands on the structure, organization, and operations of the court;
- ✓ assessing the court's capacity to meet present and future demands;
- ✓ exploring how a court might shape a more favorable future;
- ✓ developing future-oriented support and service provision strategies, along with a long-term improvement approach that addresses important goals; and

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- ✓ moving from strategic planning to strategic management and leadership in order to evaluate, routinely, general court performance and the performance of each court unit in light of a long-term strategic direction.

In short, strategic planning provides the tools courts need to create dynamic improvement strategies that acknowledge the importance of past, present, and likely future factors in shaping both what the court is now and what it can be in the future.

In addition, the materials presented here include numerous practical guidelines for initiating and sustaining a successful strategic planning process. Collectively, the guidelines illustrate that the keys for successful strategic planning include committed leadership, working collaboratively with personnel from all segments of a trial court, using a structured step-by-step process that systematically moves participants towards well defined process outcomes. More specifically, the guidelines show that among the most important attributes of successful strategic planning are:

- ✓ sustaining on-going leadership involvement;
- ✓ building continuity between planning activities;
- ✓ involving court stakeholders;
- ✓ promoting healthy group dynamics;
- ✓ documenting the results of planning activity;

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- ✓ linking proposed improvement strategies with resource allocations and day-to-day routine; and
  - ✓ developing follow-through mechanisms such as time-lines, performance measures, and executive monitoring.

Finally, we urge that now is the best time for strategic planning in courts throughout Florida, and elsewhere. Trends analyses and scenario construction efforts completed over the past few years in courts throughout the nation as well as in Florida have suggested that without considerable well thought-out effort, the future for many trial courts is likely bleak. Combined, a variety of emerging, as well as long-term social, economic, technology, and political trends suggest that without considerable improvement activity, trial courts are likely to be addressing more and more difficult problems, under greater resource constraints, within an increasingly unpleasant if not hostile political environment. Still, these same analyses also have shown that the fate of trial courts is not preordained. Courts should do strategic planning to shape a more favorable future for themselves and the public they serve.

